



# UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

## UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

General Faculties Council  
Council on Student Affairs  
Approved Open Session Minutes

Thursday, March 18, 2021  
Virtual Meeting by Zoom  
4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

### **ATTENDEES:**

Steven Dew, Chair  
Joel Agarwal  
Paramita Chaudhuri Basu  
Chris Beasley  
Dhir Bid  
André Costopoulos  
Simran Dhillon  
Anastasia Elias  
Jennifer Fang

Katie Kidd  
Melissa Padfield  
Samantha Roan  
Khandaker Shahriar  
Chanpreet Singh  
Alan Underhill  
Non-Voting  
Kate Peters

### **REGRETS:**

Karl Buchanan  
Brad Hamdon  
Sachiketha Reddy  
Teanna Winsor-Carruthers  
COSA Coordinator/Scribe  
Ann Hodgson

### **OPENING SESSION**

1 Approval of the Agenda

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and CoSA Chair

Motion: Chaudhuri Basu/Agarwal

THAT the Council on Student Affairs approve the Open Session agenda of March 18, 2021.

**Carried**

2. Comments from the Chair (no documents)

*Presenter(s):* Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and COSA Chair

*Discussion:*

In his opening remarks, the Chair welcomed committee members, guests and observers and highlighted the following recent events:

- Annual Membership Replenishment of GFC/GFC Standing Committees - The GFC Nominating Committee has commenced the annual process to fill student & staff seats on 2021-2022 GFC Standing Committees. Application details are available on the University Governance website.
- Academic Restructuring Update – three new Acting Faculty Deans have been recently appointed to replace Interim College Deans (Greta Cummings, Matina Kalcounis-Rueppell and Joseph Doucet) effective July 1, 2021. New Acting Deans are: Diane Kunyk – Faculty of Nursing, Frederick West - Faculty of Science, and Kyle Murray - Alberta School of Business. The President, Provost, College Dean

Designates and Faculty Deans continue to work closely towards the July 1 implementation timeline. Each college aims to hold workshops at varying times to facilitate planning and consultation processes.

- It has been one year since the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic due to the COVID-19 virus. Subsequently, the university community has overcome the various obstacles and challenges. The Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health anticipates that Albertans who want to be vaccinated will receive a first dose by the end of June and a second dose by fall.
- The COVID-19 Remote Teaching Awards were created this year to recognize instructors who have done an exceptional job of transitioning to remote teaching. U of A has recently awarded 10 (ten) full-time faculty members and Academic Teaching Staff in recognition of their work during the Winter 2020 & Fall 2020 terms. Recipient details are published on the Provost's webpage.
- U of A Board of Governors met on March 12 and approved the 2021-22 university budget as part of the annual budget approval cycle and reflects an 11% decrease (\$60 M) in Campus Alberta grant funding impacting the U of A. Additional funds were directed to deferred maintenance.
- The 2021-2022 Tuition and Student Financial Aid Proposal was approved and contained a 15% net increase in financial support for domestic undergraduate students (incoming and continuing students), and 7.55% for international undergraduate students (continuing students admitted prior to Fall 2020). Also approved was a special increase of \$1.50 per each Fall and Winter Term to the Health and Wellness Mandatory Non-Instructional Fee to fund initiatives related to sexual violence coordination and prevention.
- Alberta 2030 – the Provincial Government's post-secondary system review is nearing conclusion with results expected in a few months. In part, a recommendation for deconsolidation from the Province's financial and accounting systems has been made by the U of A to allow for generation of revenue by the university from a variety of resources, carry forward, and balance budgets on an annual basis.

A member asked about deconsolidation and future accountability to taxpayers. The Chair indicated that continuing mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability such as the Government's control of the Campus Alberta Grant, regular membership appointments to the Board of Governors, and remains under the purview and review of Auditor General.

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

### 3. Approval of the Open Session Minutes of January 14, 2021

Materials before members are contained in the official meeting file.

*Presenter(s):* Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)

*Motion:* Underhill/Elias

THAT the Council on Student Affairs (COSA) approve the Open Session Minutes of January 14, 2021.

**Carried**

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### 4. Student Feedback on Teaching

*Presenter(s):* John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair GFC Committee on the Learning Environment (CLE)

*Discussion:*

The Chair noted that throughout the Fall 2020/Winter 2021, CLE has undertaken a significant amount of work towards the development of a draft university teaching and learning policy. The Chair invited Dr John Nychka, Vice-Provost (Learning Initiatives) and Chair (CLE) to engage COSA members in a discussion about a number of key considerations raised by the CLE Task Force on Student Experience of Teaching and Learning (SETL) and CLE.

Supported by a detailed power-point presentation and Governance Executive Summary, Dr Nychka presented a synopsis of the teaching and learning policy development, timeline and framework, including a proposed rescission of existing University Policy 111. Dr Nychka asked COSA members for their feedback and suggestions regarding any additional stakeholders to include in the broad consultation process before proceeding further.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:

- St Joseph's College Universal Student Rating of Instruction (USRI) pilot project - was the feedback provided helpful and in line with teaching?
- Who are the current stakeholders that are participating in the consultations?
- Suggested to add Teaching Assistants to stakeholder group given close interactions with student, faculty;
- Reiterated the importance of USRI tool in keeping faculty accountable at present;
- Whatever is created or emerges through the pilot project, it must ensure that students maintain the ability to assess the quality of teaching and of the instructor in the classroom;
- Access to the USRI database - is currently difficult to access, will this be resolved in the future?
- For faculty/instructors who receive a low assessment rating, what mechanisms help the instructor grow and ensure their quality of teaching?
- USRIs need to be anonymous; can there be alternate ways to create safe spaces for students to give their feedback of personal classroom experiences?
- Given the many issues and challenges involved, how do we make a systemic change or cultural shift?

Following discussion, Dr Nychka noted that faculty are supported by a respective Department Chair with access to various development components including Teaching & Learning workshops that support and build their teaching practices. He added that in terms of USRI data compilation, a new dashboard interface is in development that will provide more user accessibility and interactivity.

#### 5. Service Excellence Transformation (SET) Update: Student Services Centre (no documents)

*Presenter(s):* Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and COSA Chair, André Costopoulos, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students, and Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar

#### *Discussion:*

The Chair welcomed Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar and Andre Costopoulos, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students, joined by team member Deeptha Gopi of the SET Program Office to provide COSA members with an update about the Student Services Centre as part of the SET transformation. The Chair noted that Ms Padfield, Dr Costopoulos and respective offices are working closely and collaboratively with the SET Team.

Supported by a detailed power-point presentation regarding the SET Student Centre (SSC), Ms Padfield and Dr Costopoulos reviewed UAT's vision, mission and goals and the new Student Services model. COSA members were invited to participate in several interactive exercises to gather feedback and share perspectives about the potentials of operational services supporting students, types of effective communication modes (channels) for connecting with students, and suggestions for additional student groups to consult with. Ms Padfield indicated that a launch of the SSC is expected in July 2021.

A member asked if there are any updates or further consideration about the Maskwa House in addition to the SSC development. Mr Andrew Sharman, Vice-President (Facilities & Operations) explained that the design proposal of the Maskwa House Project had been initially funded by the U of A in 2017 and remains a priority for the U of A.

The Provincial Government has yet to signal interest to provide provincial funding towards costs. The Office of the Provost and VP Indigenous Programs continues to work closely and collaboratively with the Offices of the VP Facilities and Operations and VP External Relations (Advancement) in this regard.

6. COVID-19 Update: Fall 2021 (no documents)

*Presenter(s):* Steven Dew, Provost and Vice-President (Academic) and COSA Chair, André Costopoulos, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students, Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar, and Andrew Sharman, Vice-President (Facilities and Operations)

*Discussion:* Dr Costopoulos, Ms Padfield, and Mr Sharman to provide an update regarding COVID-19 implications and Fall Term 2021 planning.

Supported by a detailed power-point presentation, the presenters reviewed matters relevant to the student support side, travel restrictions/international visa implications, vaccinations, student accommodations, class logistics and scheduling, and de-densifying of activities and classes across campus. Key highlights from the detailed report included, but were not limited to:

- U of A remains in a Level 3 emergency status;
- Based on information coming from AHS, Public Health and Governmental services concerning vaccination and immunity predictions, the U of A is anticipating a return to in person classes and campus operations by Fall;
- Operational planning issues include campus-wide supports such as janitorial requirements, liability and medical insurances, contact tracing, outbreak response planning, hazard assessments, and monitoring of gatherings on campus;
- A U of A 'Return to Campus Committee' has been struck with Shanti Johnson (Dean of the School of Public Health) and Andre Costopoulos as Co-Chairs with focus on supporting the academic and research sides, student services and experiences that include Fall course accessibility by international students and others abroad that may remain impacted by COVID travel restrictions.

During the discussion, members asked questions and expressed opinions including but not limited to:

- What are the implications to student groups and in person events such as Week of Welcome and mass gatherings come Fall?
- What accommodations and adaptations are being planned regarding both in-person and on-line classes that are run simultaneously within one course – how would competing needs, availability and interest be met and managed?

Ms Padfield indicated that the U of A has been engaged in campus planning aimed at ensuring students, faculty and administrators receive clear information and regular communications about Fall Term. Plans include steps to maximize in person learning, optimize scheduling, and backup options in case the U of A has to reduce people on campus and/or manage a return to remote instruction. The U of A is also finalizing a bursary to alleviate financial burdens experienced by international/at broad students at point of entry to Canada if quarantine is required. The Chair added that a General Faculties Council (GFC) meeting is scheduled for March 22, 2021 and is anticipated to gather feedback on this issue which may also create new opportunities for ideas and innovation.

7. Annual Undergraduate Enrolment Report

*Presenter(s):* Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar

*Discussion:*

The Chair invited Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar to provide a brief update regarding the Annual Undergraduate Enrolment Report. The Chair noted that this reporting item was originally before COSA members at the January 14 meeting, but given time constraints was deferred to the next meeting.

Ms Padfield presented the comprehensive annual report and indicated that intake was drawn from last Fall term and compiled by December 1, 2020. Ms Padfield noted implications to enrollment given unique circumstances due to COVID-19. She also highlighted increased enrollment by indigenous and international student groups, elevated student financial supports, and retention of students across Alberta and Canada.

COSA members received the Annual Undergraduate Enrolment Report with no questions or concerns raised.

8. Business Arising from Last Meeting - Verbal Updates from Ex-Officio Members [No documents]

- SU Update

*Presenter(s):* Joel Agarwal, President, UA Students' Union

Mr Agarwal reported on the following initiatives within the UASU purview:

- Board of Governors approval of proposal to implement a student fee that supports the hire of a Sexual Violence Prevention Coordinator and expressed his thanks to all those who contributed to the positive outcome;
- The 2021 UASU Elections have recently concluded and the incoming/outgoing SU Executive teams are engaged in transition and student governance training activities this month;
- The SU motion passed to support the major renovations of the Myer Horowitz Theatre – the SU is working closely with the Office of the VP Facilities and Operations on the \$17 M project to manage planning timelines.

The Chair thanked and acknowledged the efforts and extraordinary commitment of the SU President, Mr Joel Agarwal and the SU Executive team throughout this academic year and throughout the unique challenges due to the global pandemic and the implications of COVID-19.

- GSA Update

*Presenter(s):* Sachiketha Reddy, Vice-President (Academic), Graduate Students' Association

*Mr Reddy was unable to attend the COSA meeting and no verbal report was provided.*

- Vice-Provost and Dean of Students Update

*Presenter(s):* André Costopoulos, Vice-Provost and Dean of Students

*No further items came forward in the agenda.*

- Vice-Provost and University Registrar Update

*Presenter(s):* Melissa Padfield, Vice-Provost and Registrar

*No further items came forward in the agenda.*

9. Question Period

The Chair invited questions and comments by members.

- A member raised concern expressed by several international students further to a recent Provincial announcement indicating the U of A may proceed this Fall 2021 by offering both in-person and on-line (remote) courses. This will trigger a short, 4-month turnaround for students to obtain travel visas, etc.

In response, the Chair recognized the challenges of an in-person environment on students currently residing outside of Canada and noted that the U of A continues to work on contingencies. Ms Padfield added that the Registrar's Office is currently working with Faculties and UAI on a communication to reach students shortly and will provide details clarification on these relevant issues.

- A member inquired as to the future availability of campus food outlets and vendors in light of the anticipated changes.

In response, Dr Costopoulos reassured that plans are in progress but are subject to government expectations concerning campus restrictions, health & safety measures, and risk management assessments.

- A member expressed his thanks to COSA for its work throughout this academic year and the representation made by all committee members in their roles that are serving to support students.

## **INFORMATION REPORTS**

### 10. Items Approved by the Committee by email Ballots

There were no items.

### 11. Information Items Forwarded to Committee Members Between Meetings

There were no items.

## **CLOSING SESSION**

The Chair advised members that the March meeting of COSA marks the fourth and final regularly scheduled meeting of the 2020-21 academic year. The Chair thanked all outgoing student members for their valuable input and membership service over this exceptional year.

### 12. Adjournment

Next Meeting of COSA: September 9, 2021 \*

Next Meeting of General Faculties Council: March 22, 2021

\* Please note that the [2021-22 Governance Meeting Schedules](#) have been published online.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 6:05 p.m.